

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Influence Of Direct Divine Contact

By Larry Ray Hafley

The direct work of the Spirit has never transformed a man from sinner to saint. Balaam prophesied by the Spirit, but it did not alter his sinful ways (2 Pet. 2:15; Num. 31:16). Saul prophesied by the Spirit of God, but it did not deter his desire to kill David (1 Sam. 19).

In the New Testament, we read of incidents of direct, divine contact with men. Keep in mind that Calvinism demands that a direct, divine work of the Spirit must be applied to the heart of the sinner before he is able to act. In our observation of occasions of divine contact, note that not once did the Holy Spirit directly impart spiritual life to the heart of the sinner in order to enable him to obey the gospel.

1. *Acts 2: The Pentecostians.* The Spirit came upon the apostles, the speakers, not the audience, the sinners. This was a perfect time, if Calvinism be true, for God to demonstrate the direct, divine, enabling power of the Holy Spirit, but, alas, the Spirit came upon the disciples, not the lost. The sinners were urged to **“hearken to my words”** (vv. 14, 22, 29). **“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts”** (v. 37). The preachers did not ask God to send His Spirit to convict the sinners; they did not seek an “outpouring of the Spirit on the hearts” of the sinners. Rather, the Spirit spoke through the preachers (v. 4). In this way, the Spirit convicted the audience of sin (John 16:8).

2. *Acts 8: The Eunuch.* The angel spoke to the preacher and sent him to the sinner (v. 26). The Spirit spoke to the preacher and told him to **“go near.”** Neither the angel nor the Spirit spoke to the sinner’s heart.

3. *Acts 9: Saul.* When the Lord appeared to Saul, he commanded him to go to Damascus, **“and it shall be told thee what thou must do”** (v. 6). There is no record of “enabling power” or “conviction by the Spirit’s touch.” The Lord directed Saul to the preacher and the preacher to Saul (vv. 6-15).

“But,” it is objected, “this vision was the Lord’s work on Saul’s heart; Saul could not resist; this was ‘irresistible grace.’” The text does not so state, but, if so, why did Paul later say, **“I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision”** (Acts 26:19)? This implies that he could have been disobedient. Why say, **“I was not disobedient,”** if it could not have been otherwise?

4. *Acts 10: Cornelius.* **“The Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word”** (v. 44), but the result was not regeneration. Cornelius was not saved by the Spirit’s falling. The Spirit came in order to convince the Jews that the Gentiles were subjects of the gospel (Acts 10:47-48; 11:15-18; 15:7-11). Cornelius was saved by the words Peter spoke, not by the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:14).

The angel that visited Cornelius did not cleanse his heart (v. 3). His heart was purified by faith (Acts 15:9). The angel said, **“Send for Peter: who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved”** (Acts 11:14; 15:7).

The Gospel: God’s Power Unto Salvation

The Holy Spirit does convict the sinner. Does he effect conviction of sinners directly, without means or agency, or does he convict sinners through the instrumentality of the gospel? No argument ever devised can overcome Paul’s words, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”** (Rom. 1:16). **“The preaching of the cross...is the power of God...it please God by**

the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:18-21). What pleases God (to save men by preaching the gospel) does not please men or the arguments of Calvinism, but it is true nonetheless.

Jesus said, *"The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved"* (Luke 8:11, 12). The word of God is sown in the heart. The devil taketh the word out of their hearts (Why?) *"lest they should believe and be saved."* (1) Word in sinner's heart; (2) Faith produced; (3) Salvation accomplished. Where is the Lord's reverence to the direct work of the Spirit? It is not there.

Divine Order of Salvation

Review Paul's chain-link argument in Romans 10:13-17. Salvation is the end of the chain. What are the links? In reverse order, from last to first, one must call on the name of the Lord, but how can one call if he has not believed? How can one believe if he has not heard? "And how shall they hear without a direct work of the Spirit on the sinner's heart?" Is that what your Bible says? No! *"How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?"* Conclusion: "So then faith cometh by the Spirit's irresistible work on the sinner's heart and hearing by the enabling power of irresistible grace." Is that how it reads? What does the Bible say? *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

The Bible order is: (1) preachers sent (v. 15); (2) preachers preach (v. 15); (3) sinner hears (v. 14); (4) sinner believes (v. 14); (5) believer calls on the name of the Lord (v. 14); (6) believer saved (v. 13). There is no reference to a separate work of the Holy Spirit on the sinner's heart in Paul's chain. It is a missing link.

General Summary and Conclusion

The Spirit guided the apostles into all truth (John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:13). This word given to the apostles was to be employed to make believers (John 8:33; 17:17, 20). That is why the Lord Jesus sent them *"into all the world"* to *"preach the gospel to every creature"* (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47).

The things the apostles wrote are the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). When we read what they wrote, we are reading the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:15). Thus, the Spirit's word given through the apostles is the agent or instrument the Spirit uses to convict the sinner. *"The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). *"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe"* (John 20:30, 31). *"Many of them which heard the word believed"* (Acts 4:4). *"In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel"* (1 Cor. 4:15). *"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation"* (Eph. 1:13). *"Of his own will begat He us with the word of truth"* (Jas. 1:18). *"Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God"* (1 Pet. 1:22, 23). – These writings taken from, *The Christ, The Cross and The Church*, pp. 6-8. Published by *Guardian of Truth Foundation*, 2001. ■

A Son's Bible Lesson

Author Unknown

A small boy approached his father and said proudly, *"I know what the Bible means."* The man smiled and replied, *"What do you mean you 'know' what the Bible means?"* The son said, *"I do know!"* "Ok," said his father, *"What does the Bible mean?"* *"That's easy, Daddy,"* the boy replied. *"It stands for 'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.'" ■*

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250